



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Helping Families with Adoption

Making the decision to adopt a child is one of the most sacrificial and rewarding choices that a couple can make. Taking a child as your own and enhancing that child's life can make an absolute positive impact forever. However, at that decision point, the journey is just beginning, and unfortunately, the adoption process can oftentimes be both frustrating and overwhelming.

I had the honor of co-leading a bipartisan committee on adoption. My colleagues and I worked tirelessly to study Wisconsin's and the nation's adoption systems. We worked to find ways where we could strengthen and streamline the adoption system in order to benefit and support both adoptive parents and the precious lives of the children that they adopt. We succeeded in passing a package of four adoption bills that were all recently signed into law by the Governor. This summer, one of those bills has become effective.

Oftentimes, potential adoptive parents do not realize that there are resources to help them, not just on their journey to adoption, but also after the adoption has been finalized and as their adoptive child grows. We introduced Assembly Bill 40, which changes the total number of pre-adoptive training hours from 17 to 25, requires that six of those hours be delivered in person, and requires that part of the training take place after the child has been placed. The bill also requires adoptive parents to receive training on the issues of trauma and sexual abuse, in addition to the current training on attachment, abuse, and neglect. Further, the bill requires an in-person meeting with the adoptive parents' local Postadoption Resource Center, to ensure that families have a relationship with their local center who can be an ongoing resource for them and their child for life.

Foreign adoptions are popular, with couples being able to choose the country, culture, and gender of the child they wish to adopt. However, prior to the passage of our adoption bills, if children were adopted abroad, they essentially did not exist on paper. This was obviously problematic, setting these foreign adoptive children up for all kinds of potential abuse. There has been much media coverage on this issue. As a remedy to this problem, we introduced Assembly Bill 41, which requires adoptive parents to register a foreign adoption order with a Wisconsin court within a year of bringing a child into the country. The parents must also submit

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to the court information that pre-adoptive training and a home study were completed. This bill became effective just last month.

Both bills passed the Legislature on a bipartisan basis, on unanimous votes, and they have been signed into law. Adoptive parents and the children they raise are indeed a precious gem for our state. If you would like more information on adoption, or even on foster care, feel free to visit the state's Department of Children and Families at <http://dcf.wi.gov/>, or as always, feel free to contact my office at any time.

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